

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped shaft, comprising ~~the steps of:~~

holding an upper axial part and a lower axial part ~~axially~~
of a solid rod-like blank with an upper and a lower die,
5 respectively, which ~~have~~ define a stepped recess of large
diameter in a region ~~thereof~~ where ~~they~~ the upper and lower dies
are opposed to each other;

compressing the blank from ~~both its~~ axially opposite sides
thereof with an upper punch and a lower punch, respectively, each
10 of which is smaller in diameter than the blank and at least one
of which is moving during the compressing, thereby extruding the
blank ~~so such~~ that an axial hollow is formed therein in each of
said upper and lower parts about ~~its~~ an axis of the blank, with a
solid plug-like portion left in between the axial hollows, such
15 in each of said upper and lower parts and that a portion of the
blank opposed to said stepped recess of large diameter expands in
diameter and deforms into said recess, and such that the blank
expands axially to become longer while said portion of the blank
deforms into said recess; while leaving a solid plug-like portion
20 between said punches; and

thereafter ~~further compressively~~ moving one of said punches
to shear said solid plug-like portion away from the blank and
to force it out of the blank,

25 ~~whereby wherein, as a result,~~ said blank is formed with a
stepped portion of large diameter by ~~radially expanding the~~
~~radial expansion and deformation, with a long axial portion, in a~~
~~region intermediate between its opposed ends, or at one of these~~
~~ends and with a continuous axial hollow about its~~ the axis of the
~~blank, thereby forming such that~~ a hollow stepped shaft is
30 formed.

2. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped
shaft as set forth in claim 1, wherein said solid rod-like blank
is loaded into said upper and lower dies ~~which~~ while the upper
and lower dies are in a closed die-fastened state and thereafter
5 extrusion of the blank is performed with said punches.

3. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped
shaft as set forth in claim 1, wherein said solid rod-like blank
is loaded into said upper and lower dies ~~which~~ while the upper
and lower dies are in an open die-unfastened state and thereafter
5 extrusion of the blank ~~are~~ is performed with said punches while
said dies are being closed and fastened.

4. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped
shaft as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 3, ~~wherein the~~
~~method further comprises a further step wherein a~~ further

5 ~~comprising adding an additional contour to the hollow stepped shaft so formed as aforesaid is further formed in another die set, to impart an additional outer contour thereto.~~

5. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a hollow stepped shaft as set forth in claim 4, wherein ~~in said further step,~~ said additional outer contour is imparted to the hollow stepped shaft ~~with~~ while a mandrel is inserted therein.

Claims 6-13 (Canceled).

14. (Withdrawn) A hollow stepped shaft formed by a method as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 3.

Claim 15 (Canceled).

16. (Withdrawn) A hollow stepped shaft formed by a method as set forth in claim 4.

17. (Withdrawn) A hollow stepped shaft formed by a method as set forth in claim 5.

Claims 18 and 19 (Canceled).